

[No. 11.]

MEMORIAL of H. G. Wells, asking an appropriation for the Agricultural College of this State, and remonstrating against the removal of said College.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Michigan:

The undersigned, a citizen of the county of Kalamazoo, and for four years last past a member of the "Board of Agriculture," would respectfully represent that the proposition submitted to your honorable bodies by the Executive Committee of the State Agricultural Society, to remove the "Agricultural College" to some more eligible locality, should be carefully examined and thoroughly canvassed before the same is assented to and finally determined. "Save me from pretended friends, and I will hold in check mine enemies," might well be the exclamation of the authority having in charge the Agricultural College of Michigan. Professions of friendship have heretofore oftentimes preceded the attempt to injure and destroy. The undersigned would insist that the statements embodied in the long list of "whereas," preceding the resolutions adopted by the "Executive Committee of the Agricultural Society," are not

established facts, by any means; on the contrary, they are the mere "fancy opinions" of gentlemen, very respectable, it is true, in their several positions in life, but seemingly with limited opportunities for observation on this, a subject of grave importance to the masses of the people, and reaching conclusions, not very creditable to the intelligence of a body of men, who by some kind of fiction, are supposed to exercise executive power and ability, after a proper show of thought, research and thinking qualities.

The undersigned would not assent that the location of the Agricultural College is the best that could be made in the State of Michigan, but he begs leave most respectfully to insist that the averments in the preamble presented to the Legislature by this committee, are not averments of fact, or even reasonable conclusions, to wit: that the College has thus far "failed to meet the expectations of its friends and to secure the sympathy and coöperation of the farmers of the State, for whose especial benefit it was created, from the simple fact of its unfortunate and inaccessible location." It will be recollected that the College was first opened for the reception of students in 1857; that it was planned and inaugurated before a single other institution of the kind existed in the United States; that it had no precedent from which it could adopt all that was good or avoid that which had been proved and tried, as evil. With a boldness and confidence in ultimate good results, a former Legislature carried out the constitutional provision and established the Agricultural College, estimating, undoubtedly, that in the lapse of time, practice would cure many difficulties resulting from inexperience. Admit that its location, at the time made was not as fortunate as might have been; that errors in its management have occurred; that large amounts were imprudently expended in the erection of the College, its boarding-hall and dwelling-houses for the professors: all this is far from establishing the fact that it now fails to have the sympathy of the farmers of the State.

The objection of "inaccessible location," is obviated to a

certain extent, by the opening of the Railroad from Owosso to Lansing, and the more recent completion of railroad communication from the Saginaw Valley to the Detroit and Milwaukee Railway; easy access is thus given to the people of a large portion of the State, to reach the College within the compass of twelve hours. A line of road is now in process of construction from Lansing to Jackson, with a certainty of completion before the next regular session of the Legislature: this done, and the phrase of the Executive Committee, "*inaccessible location*," will have as little meaning in connexion with the "Agricultural College," as, I trust, their resolutions will have *force* with your honorable bodies, in inducing legislative provision for its removal. Your own wise forethought has, undoubtedly, contemplated the extension of the Grand Trunk Railroad, from Port Huron to the southerly extreme of Lake Michigan. The character of the country intervening between these points, and the lines of Railroad already constructed across the Peninsula, indicate that the city of Lansing will be a prominent point on this great thoroughfare. In view of the past, and the unfaltering confidence of your petitioner, in the future power and progress of the American people, I believe this road, over the line suggested, will soon be constructed; and then, I have no doubt, the gentlemen who drafted the resolutions, and the Executive Committee of the State Agricultural Society, who, in due ceremony, adopted them, will each and every one of them, deny that they ever used the phrase "*inaccessible location*," in connection with the Agricultural College.

Intending to be respectful to your honorable bodies, and desiring more especially not to make statements in this, a petition for your consideration, not entirely in accordance with the truth, I do insist that the College has received careful attention from its managing board during the past four years; that it has been, during that time, steadily growing in favor with the people; that, by improvements made in connexion with the real estate; by reorganizing its labor system to some considerable extent; by changing its course of study, so as

to give more of the practical in its system of education, the College has actually made progress, and bids fair, at no distant day to become, in the estimate of all, an honor to the State.

In its history, one of the impediments to advancement has ever been the uncertainty of its continued existence. The student could have no guarantee this year that the appropriation would be continued for the next. He hesitated to enter an institution where the liability existed that his four years' course would be interrupted by a failure on the part of the Legislature to make the annual appropriation. This uncertainty is measurably past. The Congressional grant gives the Legislature assurance that in the no distant future the sale of the 240,000 acres of land will furnish a fund, munificent and ample, to sustain a college where thousands of the young men of the country will be trained "in such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts."

I pray your honorable bodies that prompt action be had on the question of the removal of the College, for while it is being agitated, it interferes with the action of the Board of Agriculture in its arrangement for the current year.

In view of the fact that this College recognizes and acts upon the principle that manual labor is honorable, and with the knowledge that other of the States are now moving in the establishment of "Agricultural Colleges," so as to avail themselves of the congressional land grants; that the ablest minds of the country are devising systems and plans, by which the greatest good to the greatest number, will be realized from these munificent donations; and more especially since God in his good Providence, is now in our day, establishing the great principle throughout the South as well as the North, that labor is honorable and entitled to its reward, it becomes you, as legislators, to carefully move in all matters appertaining to the industrial interests of the people of Michigan.

Your petitioner, with all due respect for the intelligence of your honorable bodies, would beg leave to suggest that the time is past for the consideration of the question as to whether

the location of the "Agricultural College" was the most judicious that could have been made. The College farm is purchased and paid for; the buildings have been erected, and in extent are sufficient to accommodate more than one hundred and twenty students. An able corps of professors and teachers are now employed, all impressed with the idea, from present, perfected plans, that, during the coming two years, more of character can and will be given to the Institution, in the estimation of the people of Michigan, than during its whole former history.

Permit me here especially to invite your attention to the fact that a class of pupils, now in the common schools of the State are looking forward to this College as the only place where, with the glorious privilege of self labor, they can bring themselves forward to take position among the intelligent farmers, mechanics, and professional men of their time. They are the sons of fathers who, in the storm of battle, have gone down in defense of that flag which this day, spreading its ample folds over your halls of legislation, gives evidence that you and all the people of this State are free—that Michigan is still of the Union, an inseparable part of the government, which has now, and will forever have power and strength to sustain itself against traitors at home or enemies abroad.

Your petitioner would respectfully ask that a liberal appropriation for the Agricultural College for the coming two years be made by your honorable bodies, and that all legislation contemplating a removal of the College be indefinitely postponed, and your petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

HEZEKIAH G. WELLS,
of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

